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WESTERN TEXAS

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WESTERN TEXAS.

VALLEY

OF THE

RIO GRANDE;

ITS SOIL, PRODUCTIONS, CLIMATE,

&c., &c.

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1847.

WESTERN TEXAS.

VALLEY OF THE RIO GRANDE;

ITS SOIL, PRODUCTIONS, &c., &c.

It is a singular fact, that the soil of this extensive valley is composed of mineral constituents precisely similar to those which compose the Delta of the Nile, and there is scarcely a doubt that, under a proper system of culture, it will become equally productive.

The Rio Grande resembles the Nile in many remarkable features. It has its source in towering primitive mountains, composed of red granite, identical in appearance and geological structure with the material from which the imperishable monuments of the Pharaohs were hewn.

Below these mountains, at different elevations, are extensive formations of secondary limestone and sandstone; vast fields of moving sand through which the river forces its devious way in its annual floods, by constantly changing channels; and broad plains covered, like those of Upper Egypt, with silicious pebbles, such as flints, agates and chalcedony, intermingled with large petrified trees, such as are found near Cairo. Indeed, throughout its whole length and breadth, this extensive valley presents nearly the same geological characteristics as that of the Nile, and its soil, being made up of the *detritus* of similar rocky formations, must be similar in its chemical constituents.

It is true that the Valley of the Rio Grande is not subject, like that of the Nile, to annual inundations, but it is more favored by climate, as the rains fall so frequently and in such quantities that the crops seldom fail from drought. Indeed, all the elements of fertility exist in this fine region, and, as before observed, only require to be developed by a system of agriculture similar to that practised in Upper Egypt, to yield a return as ample as can be realized on the richest lands of that prolific country. The truth of this theory is practically evinced at El Paso, six hundred

miles above Point Isabel, (as the crow flies,) where, by means of irrigation, the most abundant crops are raised with comparatively little labor.

The time is probably not far distant when the Egyptian cotton will be cultivated in the valley of the Rio Grande to as great an extent as on the banks of the Nile. A few experiments have been made in the culture of the cotton plant in the vicinity of Matamoras, and have proved remarkably successful. It grows in this region with wonderful luxuriance, and yields abundantly, almost without labor or care. The sugar cane also here grows to an enormous size, and far exceeds in its products the cane of Louisiana or of any portion of Eastern Texas.

It has been remarked by naturalists that tropical plants are more productive at or near the Northern limits of their growth, than near the equator. If this doctrine is correct, the culture of sugar cane will be found more profitable in the lower portion of the Valley of the Rio Grande than it is even in Cuba. Many valuable tropical fruits may also be grown in this section with great advantage. The orange, fig and pomegranate flourish with great luxuriance in the neighborhood of Matamoras and Camargo. Such advantages of soil and climate cannot be overlooked, and it may be taken for granted that at no distant day, large portions of the country between Point Isabel and Loredo, and even above the Presidio del Rio Grande, will be covered with plantations of sugar cane and Egyptian cotton, interspersed with groves of oranges, figs, olives, and other fruits of the tropics, surpassing in luxuriance of growth and beauty of appearance the same productions in any other region of the South. That portion of the Rio Grande valley lying farther up—say from the Presidio road to one hundred miles above the mouth of the Puerco—with the land lying along the tributaries of these two rivers, is admirably adapted for even a more varied production, and will support and enrich a dense population.

Indeed the valleys of the several tributary streams of this region are equal in all respects to the valley of the Colorado. That of the Puerco is said to be superior to it. These rich vales, and the whole region are sheltered from the icy winds of the North by high ranges of mountains, and enjoy a delightfully mild and temperate climate. Under the impotent sway of Spain, and the still more impotent sway of Mexico, there has existed no stimulus to industry, and from this and other causes, these fertile lands have remained almost as desolate and unimproved as they were when occupied alone as the hunting ground of the savage. That time has gone by. Another race will soon strike deep the roots of civilization in this favored region, and bring enterprize, industry and science to bear upon

its affluent soil—a soil capable of supporting a more dense population than any other portion of the continent.

PRODUCTIONS OF WESTERN TEXAS.

MAIZE or Indian Corn yields a large and profitable return, with little trouble or expenditure. The average crop on good land is from fifty to seventy bushels per acre, and larger quantities have frequently been gathered. Two crops may be harvested annually; the seed of the first being planted in February, and of the second late in June. A crop of wheat equal in quality to the best Kentucky, has been cut in May on land in Western Texas, and the same land has yielded a heavy crop of corn in the ensuing October.

Capital, and the requisite skill and labor, are all that is necessary to place many sections of Western Texas among the best wine producing countries in the world. The native grape has a fine flavor, and the vines are frequently seen festooning and overtopping trees from eighty to one hundred feet in height. On sandy ridges unfit for cultivation, the vines are most abundant. Should German emigrants from the Rhenish provinces make the same efforts here as they made at Vevay, Indiana, entire success would unquestionably reward them. Almost every variety of the grape is found growing in this part of Texas. In the country near the Paso del Norte, on the Rio Grande, which, according to Humboldt, resembles the finest portions of Andalusia, the vine has long been cultivated, and a wine is manufactured there which is held in high estimation. In the opinion of that sagacious naturalist, this region, in the article of wine, will yet become to the rest of the continent what France, Spain, Portugal and Italy, have been and are, to the North of Europe.*

[*From the Washington Union, May 13th.*]

*We published a few days since an intimation of a good route for a railroad to the Pacific, from the Lower Mississippi, through Texas, to the Rio del Norte, near El Paso, and from thence by the valley of the Gila to San Diego, on the Pacific. Since then we have seen the following letter from a resident on the Del Norte, describing the productiveness of the valley of the Paso, near which the railroad would pass. Although this letter has reference to a different route, yet its account of the productiveness of that region makes it of value to any route. We therefore publish it.

EL PASO, *January* 25, 1847.

The United States forces, under command of Colonel Alexander W. Doniphan, took possession of the city of El Paso, department of Chihuahua, on Sunday, the 27th December, 1846, two days after the battle of Bracito, the strength of his command being about 900 men.

My object in this communication is to give the War Department, and the country at large, some idea of the resources of the fruitful valley of El Paso, and of its importance to the United States. The settlement of El Paso extends from the falls of the Rio Grande, on the north, to the Presidio, on the south—a distance of twenty-two miles—and is one continuous orchard and vineyard, embracing, in its ample area, an industrious and peaceable population of at least 8,000. The spacious valley is about midway between Santa Fe and Chihuahua, and is isolated from all other Mexican settlements by the mountains that rise on the east and west, and close into the river on the north

The Tobacco plant thrives best on a light, rich, warm soil, and the experiments made on the Guadaloupe show what *may* be done with this important production in favored locations in Western Texas.

The Indigo plant is indigenous to the soil, and may become an article of export. It has long been manufactured for domestic use in Texas, and Texan Indigo is considered of a very superior quality.

In the dry and barren localities, the cactus, on which the cochineal insect feeds, grows in great profusion, and cochineal of good quality is found in abundance in the country about Loredo and the Presidio del Rio Grande.

and south. The breadth of the valley is about ten miles. The falls of the river are two miles north of the "*Plaza Publica*," or public square, and afford sufficient water power for grist and saw mills, enough to supply the entire settlement with flour and lumber. The most important production of the valley is the grape, from which are annually manufactured not less than 200,000 gallons of, perhaps, the richest and best wine in the world. This wine is worth $2 per gallon, and constitutes the principal revenue of the city. The El Paso wines are superior in richness of flavor and pleasantness of taste to anything of the kind I ever met with in the United States, and I doubt not that they are far superior to the best wines ever produced in the valley of the Rhine, or on the sunny hills of France. Also great quantities of the grape of this valley are dried in clusters and preserved for use during the winter; in this state I regard them far superior to the best raisins that are imported into the United States.

If this valley were cultivated by an energetic American population, it would yield, perhaps, ten times the quantity of wine and fruits at present procured. Were the wholesome influences and protection of our republican institutions extended beyond the Rio Del Norte, an American population, possessing American feelings, and speaking the American language, would soon spring up here. To facilitate the peopling of this valley by the Anglo-American race, nothing would contribute so much as the opening of a communication between this rich valley and the Western States, by a turnpike, railroad, or some other thoroughfare, which would afford a market for the fruits and wines of this river country. Perhaps the most feasible and economical plan, though not the most direct, of opening an outlet to the grape valley of the Rio Grande, would be the construction of a grand canal from this place following the meanderings of the river to its highest navigable point. If a communication by either of these routes were opened, this valley would soon become the seat of wealth, influence and refinement. It would be one of the richest and most fashionable parts of the continent. A communication between the valley of the Mississippi and that of the Del Norte, affording an easy method of exchanging the products of one for those of the other, will do more than anything else to facilitate the westward march of civilization and republican government. It would be an act of charity to this people to rid them of their present governors, and throw around them the shield of American protection.

That the idea of a canal following the course of the Del Norte may not appear impracticable, it may not be amiss to state that no country in the world is better adapted for the construction of canals than this valley. As the earth is sandy, canals are easily constructed; but there is a kind of cement intermixed with the sand that renders the banks of canals as firm as a wall. There is already a grand canal or *acequia* leading out from the river above the falls, extending through the entire length of the valley of El Paso, irrigating every farm and vineyard to the Presidio, where it rejoins the river.

Pears, peaches, apples, quinces and figs, are produced in the greatest profusion. The climate of this country is most salubrious and healthful. The inhabitants here suffer more from the depredations of the Apaches than from any other cause. They are frequently robbed of all they possess, in one night, by the incursions of these lawless plunderers. A few companies of dragoons would, however, soon drive them from their hiding places in the mountains, and put an end to their depredations.

Add to the fruits and wines of this rich valley a vast quantity of corn, wheat, and other small grain, and the surplus production of the place will, under its present state of agriculture, amount to near one million of dollars per annum. What, then, would be the amount of the surplus under the advantages of American agriculture?

I have thought proper to make these suggestions to the War Department, as there is no corps of field and topographical engineers with this branch of the western army, whose duty it would have been to make such report. Respectfully, &c.

JOHN T. HUGHES.

His Excellency, Wm. L. Marcy, Secretary of War.

The mulberry tree is a common production and of vigorous growth, in Western Texas, the climate of which is well adapted to the rearing of the silk worm. The experiment of producing silk has been made at San Antonio with the most satisfactory results.

Sweet potatoes flourish in these latitudes—the prairie lands yielding 400 to 500 bushels to the acre. The common potato is equally productive and of excellent quality. The February plantings yield a plentiful return in April and May, but the produce of this root when planted in the heat of summer, is inferior both in size and quality.

The low alluvial lands, of course, are not suited to wheat, but above the line from Austin on the Colorado, across the San Antonio, Medina, Rio Frio and Nueces to the Rio Grande, and along the rolling lands of the Puerco, wheat of the finest quality can be raised in abundance. The same remark also applies to the land along the Guadaloupe range, to the San Saba. It is the humid and hot, not the dry and warm climate, that is unfavorable to wheat.

Barley may be grown on the light, mellow soil of the sloping prairies and post oak lands; the rolling districts will supply oats, rye and buckwheat, in sufficient quantities for home consumption; and the undulating and hilly districts will not disappoint the farmer in the production of hemp and flax.

The soil and climate of this part of Texas are favorable to the growth of the vanilla vine, the fruit of which is exported from Mexico to Europe, as well as to this country in smaller quantities, and is used for confectionary purposes; but chiefly for mixing with and perfuming chocolate.

As regards pasture, the whole face of the country—woodland and prairie, upland and bottom—is verdant with grass. The indigenous, prairie grass is tall, coarse, full of seed at the top, and, when young, resembles wheat in the spring. But in grasses the glory of the State is the *musquit*, found only in Western Texas. It yields a fine soft sward, preserves its verdure in the winter, and, beyond all comparison, affords the best wild pasture in the world. It has also the peculiar property of retaining its nutritive quality after it has become dry and apparently dead. The upland and hilly region of Western Texas is carpeted with it, and never did bountiful nature spread out a more abundant or more excellent pasturage for sheep, than it affords. All that is wanting is to bring the white flocks to the green herbage, and thus turn this spontaneous production of a prolific soil to the use for which Providence designed it.

From this slight but truthful sketch of the country, its productive capabilities and natural vegetation, it would seem reasonable to conclude that

the agricultural emigrant, from whatever region he may hail, can be easily suited in Western Texas. If he come from the Southern States, with large capital, seeking large and rich returns, he may locate himself on the alluvial lands of the San Antonio, the Nueces, or the Rio Grande. If accustomed to a more temperate or a colder clime, and desirous of embracing with the cultivation of the earth, stock raising of all descriptions, he may go farther up the Rio Grande or settle upon the Los Moras, East Fork, or Puerco. The rich soil and ample range in and around these locations, irrigated by pure and rapid streams, will produce almost every thing that earth can yield for consumption or export, while the rearing of horses, mules, cattle and swine, not overlooking the noble Saxony and hardy merino, may be carried on there to an extent, and with an amount of cost and labor absolutely incredible to those who have never seen any portion of this Western Eden. Indeed the exuberance of nature and the benignity of the climate have left little, comparatively, for man to do. It is an open country and does not require the labor of a lifetime, before the plough can be struck deep into the soil; and as to flocks, only a little attention is requisite, winter and summer, to keep them from running wild.

In the nuts of the woods, especially the ground pea nut, hogs will long continue to find unbought and nutricious sustenance; requiring only a few weeks feeding on corn to make the pork fat and firm enough for market in any part of the world. The increase of stock too, is much more rapid than in colder climates. It would cost more to raise one thousand chickens any where within the limits of the "Old Thirteen," than to raise one thousand head of cattle, or ten times that number of sheep, in the region of country referred to.

The whole of Texas, but in a singular degree the western portion, from the Colorado to the Rio Grande, and from the Gulf to the Mountains, is free from those accumulations of stagnant water, which, under the burning sun of the South, render a large portion of the southern borders of the United States, at certain seasons, little better than a pestiferous desert. The porous nature of the soil, the gradual elevation of the land toward the interior, and the general rise of the banks from the beds of the rivers, preclude the formation of swamps to any injurious extent.

CLIMATE.

The climate of Texas is as varied as the productive qualities of its soil. On the Gulf and near large rivers, especially those toward the East, which are occasionally overflowed, it resembles that of the neighboring States of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, with an ample

abatement, however, of injurious influences. The reason of its greater salubrity is this: The Texan forests are as free from the rank undergrowth of the heavily wooded districts of those States, as the level region of Texas generally is from those putrid swamps which under the almost vertical sun of the South, exhale the elements of disease and death. In Texas, from river to river, the country consists of a series of open acclivities; while in Louisiana and Mississippi the land similarly situated, being covered with compact forests and level, retains the annual inundations, and the stagnant moisture with the dense vegetation it nourishes, acted upon by the solar heat, generates noxious miasma, the ever fruitful cause of malignant fever. Intermittent fevers—such as are common in all new countries, when the processes of clearing and cultivation first expose to the sun's heat the vegetable deposit of ages—are not unknown on the low alluvial soil of Texas; but with the progress of population and improvement these fevers diminish in violence, and ultimately disappear.

The prevailing summer wind in Texas is from the South West, and besides being healthy and agreeable, it greatly tempers the heat of July and August with its grateful and constant play. While the midsummer air of the alluvial region of Mississippi and Louisiana is surcharged with mephitic vapor, the clear atmosphere of Texas is quickened and renovated by the invigorating breeze from the Gulf, which, passing over the dry, verdant and rolling surface of the interior, enlivens the spirits of the settler and gives a zest to even passive physical enjoyment. Without this refreshing and exhilarating breeze, which continues, with but slight interruptions for six months of the year, the temperature of the low lands would certainly be oppressive and the climate unhealthy.

By thermometrical calculations, made in different sections of the country, from April to September, for a period of three years, the mercury has been found to range from 63° to 100°. Average heat at 9 o'clock in the morning, 73°—at 12 o'clock noon, 83°—at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, 77°.

But the indications of the thermometer can give no accurate idea of the climate of Western Texas, to those who have never experienced its effects. The same degree of heat which, in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi would be overpowering, in this portion of Texas would occasion comparatively little inconvenience. From the first of April till the close of September, the benignant breezes to which we have referred, commence soon after sun-rise, and continue until 3 or 4 P. M.,

when they gradually die away. After sun-set a light breeze again springs up, and the atmosphere grows cooler and cooler until early dawn.

The south west wind, so contributive to health and comfort on the level region of the coast, becomes an unmingled blessing in the north-west portion of Texas, as it sweeps among the cool springs, clear streams, wooded bottoms, timbered islands, and flower-spangled prairies of that region. The rolling country stretching from Austin on the Colorado, over the head waters of the Guadaloupe, San Antonio, Medina, and Nueces, to the Rio Grande, and embracing north of this line the whole range of country from the fertile valley of the Puerco along the spurs of the Guadaloupe range to the San Saba mountains, (whose vales and acclivities are as rich in soil as their mines are known to be in the precious metals,) is swept by this salubrious sea wind.

The greater portion of this beautiful region, which has justly received the name of the "*Italy of America*," is blessed with a temperature delightful to the senses, favorable to life, and adapted to the production of most of the comforts and luxuries which render life agreeable. Within this range the mildness of the seasons enables the planter and the farmer to raise whatever they choose, and to accumulate stock of every kind almost without toil or expense. This is the region of country most suitable to a Northern constitution, and here settlers from the northern sections of the United States may at once lay the foundation of future wealth, and plant the seeds of civilization. Nor need the European emigrant be deterred by apprehensions on the score of health, from removing to a soil possessing powers of production which all but anticipate the wants of man. R. H. Chinn, a Kentucky gentleman, in a communication published by him in 1838, thus compares Texas with Kentucky: "I have seen," says he, "almost every acre of Kentucky, and I do believe that Texas has greatly the advantage. The greater part of Texas is, by nature, at once prepared for the plough of the husbandman. About *one-third* of Kentucky is fertile and capable of successful settlement and cultivation; *nine-tenths* of all explored Texas are of that character; and the soil and climate of Texas can produce advantageously every thing which Kentucky *can*, and many things requisite for the wants of man that Kentucky *cannot*. The laborious, protracted and expensive work of clearing a plantation is necessary in but few places. This gives to the country a great and decided advantage."

General Pike, of the U. S. Army, in his Travels, says of Texas—"It has one of the most delightful temperatures in the world. Take it generally, it is one of the richest, most prolific, and best watered countries in the world."

Col. Longworthy, of Vermont, who travelled over Texas, remarks in his published narrative, that he had seen "nearly all of the Northern States, and Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois and Louisiana, which were certainly, in relation to soil, climate and productions, entitled to the favorable opinion which has often been expressed with regard to them;" "but," he unhesitatingly adds, "in goodness of soil, in the extent and variety of productions, in amenity of climate, in local and commercial advantages, in short, in every thing which conduces to the comfort of man, Texas has a decided preference over any country he has ever seen."

General Ward, who had served long in the Mexican army, describes the climate of the interior of Texas as differing but little from that of the "South of Europe, Buenos Ayres, and the Cape of Good Hope."

Captain Marryatt, in his "Diary in America," speaks thus: "In the Southern portions of America there are millions of acres upon which cotton can be cultivated, particularly in Texas, the soil of which is so congenial that they can produce 1000 lbs. to the 400 lbs. raised by the Americans."

It is to Texas particularly, he says, that England must look for this product. It may be asked, how is it, as Texas is so far south, that a white population can labor there? It is because Texas is a prairie country and being situated on the Gulf of Mexico, a sea breeze is always blowing across the whole country, rendering the air cool and refreshing, notwithstanding the heat of the sun's rays.

Wm. Kennedy, Esq., British Consul, who travelled all over Texas, and still resides in Galveston, in his able work, thus sums up its advantages:

"All competent judges who have explored the country agree in opinion, that for apparent depth and richness, and capabilities of raising the commodities necessary for animal subsistence and enjoyment, the soil of Texas is not surpassed by that of any other country in the Western hemisphere. After traversing the border and advancing toward the interior, this singular country exhibits its beauties and developes its resources. In the rolling and hilly country the grazier and cultivator of products, familiar to the European farmer, may obtain easy and ample returns from plains and valleys unrivalled for natural attractions; and on the low line of the coast, the enterprise of the Southern planter will be prodigally rewarded by the vegetable treasures of a tropical clime. To a settler who desires to enjoy the advantages of the upper region, without fixing his residence too remote from the sea, the Western part of Texas, with its sparkling streams flowing through a fertile and picturesque country, is more suitable than the Eastern. But it is the peculiar charm

of Texas that it offers to the most dissimilar tastes and habits the means of selecting a place of rest in some congenial spot."

During the spring and summer of 1845, the compiler of this statement travelled over a large portion of Texas, and he must own the accounts above given are in his judgment truthful and accurate. In addition to the results of his own personal observation, he learned much from the Texan Rangers, stationed at San Antonio, and examined a great many Mexican traders and old inhabitants who had traversed the whole of the country lying North of the Presidio, on this side of the Rio Grande. They all concurred in pronouncing this region, beyond comparison, the best portion of Texas. Col. Francis W. Johnson, for twenty years a resident of Texas, a gentleman of high character and great intelligence, by a letter now in the possession of the writer, fully confirms all that others have said in eulogy of Texas, and especially of the country up the Rio Grande and its tributaries, Los Moras, the Puerco and East Fork. Similar testimony is borne by the gallant Captain Walker.*

PARK PLACE HOUSE,
New York, December 5th, 1846.

* *My Dear Sir*—In answer to your request to state what I know, and my opinion, of the country north of the Presidio-road and on the east side of the Rio Grande, I take great pleasure in making the following statement:

From my long residence, and general knowledge, of almost every part of Texas, I have no hesitation in saying that the country lying between the points indicated by you, and especially that part lying between the Los Moras and the Rio Puerco, embraces a territory that will compare with any other district in Texas. While the valleys of the Rio Grande, as well as those of the Los Moras and Rio Puerco, are of the richest and most fertile soils, the hills or highlands afford the finest pasturage for horses, mules, horned cattle, sheep, and goats.

It may be asked why a country combining so many natural advantages has remained, thus long, unsettled. To this question I answer: first, because the American settlements, from the very nature of the contracts for colonizing, were confined mostly to the eastern portion of Texas; for instance, those of Col. S. F. Austin, which embraced a larger extent of territory than those of any other Empresario, and who, of the many that made contracts for introducing families and colonizing various districts, was the only one who completed a single contract; secondly, because the Government of Mexico could not, or would not, afford protection to that frontier; and, since the Independence of Texas, to the inroads of the Indians has been added that of the Mexicans.

In conclusion, and in addition to what I have already said, it may be proper to say that the navigation of the Rio Grande, at no distant day, will afford facilities, and hold out such inducements, as cannot fail to enlist the employment of an immense amount of capital. The trade of the Northern Provinces of Mexico (which is highly important both on account of the precious metals and stock) will, from the very nature of things, pass through this channel as the most natural, direct, safe, and cheap. Taking this view of the subject, it is a question of no little importance to determine a suitable point at or near the head of navigation, at which to establish a depot. In casting about, it has appeared to me, that at or near the confluence of the Rio Puerco is that point which, when we consider the advantages of navigation, the trade of the Northern Provinces of Mexico, and the extent and fertility of the country on the east side of the Rio Grande, Los Moras, Rio Puerco, and other tributaries of those streams, it is hazarding but little to say that it will form one of the most important commercial as well as agricultural and grazing point and territory, of equal extent, to be found on this continent.

Any information, in relation to this or any other portion of Texas, which I may be in possession of, I will freely communicate to you. Yours truly,

F. W. JOHNSON.

From my personal knowledge, and good sourcesof information, relative to the section of country described, I fully concur in the within statement.

S. H. WALKER,
Capt. U. S. Dragoons.

Captain Daniel Ruggles, of 5th Infantry, U. S. Army, in a letter dated Reynosa, Mexico, (a town on the Rio Grande, between Matamoras and Camargo) Dec. 10th, 1846, writes in relation to such portions of this great valley as had come under his observation, as follows: "All persons of experience in the growth of sugar and cotton, concur in the opinion that this valley is the garden spot of the world, surpassing beyond all comparison the lower Mississippi, and I doubt not, the valley of the Nile in the palmiest days of its prosperity. This whole valley is composed of an alluvial deposit of inexhaustible fertility. I have examined," he continues further, "the cotton, corn and sugar, along this river, and although these products receive comparatively no cultivation, still the results are wonderful. There are points where the wild cotton is apparently so abundant as to well repay gathering. The Mexicans do not cultivate it, they say, because their rapacious government, will thereby find the less of which to rob them. I have been assured that one cotton stock has been known to produce four hundred and eighty well filled bolls of cotton, and from its luxuriant growth, I can well credit it; and that from one hill 14 lbs. of cotton in the seed has been gathered. This outdoes the Mississippi Valley. I saw sugar cane twelve feet high and not of full growth."

In addition to all these authorities, I may be permitted to cite that of Capt. Henry, of the U. S. Army. Many interesting papers from his pen have appeared in the New York Spirit of the Times. In that paper of the 1st of August, he says: "Who can describe this lovely valley and its delicious climate? No poet in the fervency of his imagination could more than color the scene. Nothing can exceed the delicious coolness of this climate.

"Nay, start not, ye Northern farmers, ye yankees of yankee land, and laugh at any thing like coolness under this tropical sun. No summer climate can exceed it in loveliness. Keep out of the sun and you never feel the heat. A constant breeze is blowing, too strong at times for comfort, but always delicious. Even in the sun you are not aware of its power, so refreshing is this everlasting breath of nature. No part of Texas equals in salubrity or surpasses in fertility the valley of the Rio Grande. The river courses its way from the mountains through a varied climate, that will produce any thing, from wheat to sugar and cotton. Nothing can surpass the rich growth of the vines. This region of country is bound to be settled very rapidly, even to the prejudice of other parts of Texas. If nothing else points it out as a desirable location, the fact that the Rio Grande is really a navigable stream, is sufficient. There are to be sure rivers in Texas—the Trinity, Brazos and Colorado—that at certain seasons will admit of navigation, but they are at all times un-

certain, whereas the Rio Grande, for several hundred miles, is rarely low enough to prevent its navigation by light draught steamers. In point of health it is unsurpassed in the world. There are no causes for disease; there are no swamps, which in the heat of summer throw out their poisonous miasma. The banks are high and the country preserves that character to the Colorado. Let this boundary be settled, and there will be a tide of emigration to this favored region, that will be unequalled. Tell our Northern farmers, the Yankees, to come and judge for themselves, and ten to one they will be so pleased that they will settle here. Cultivation can be carried on here with white labor, I think, beyond a doubt. The impression that has gone abroad of the unhealthiness of this climate, of its various insects and animals is all humbug. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to see this valley settled by that class of men. They would make it one flower garden, from the source of the river to its mouth."

EMIGRATION TO TEXAS.

Few persons can form an adequate idea of the stream of population ready to flow into Texas, so soon as the existing war shall be closed and security restored upon the border. Nor is it easy for people in this section of the Union to realise the facilities with which the face of the country can be dotted over with plantations and farms, and brought into a high state of cultivation. We generally associate with the idea of settling a new country, the toil of many years in clearing away dense forests. Two hundred dollars will buy a quarter section of the public land in any of the new States of the West; two thousand dollars will not render more than one half of it fit for the plough; but in Texas the land may be purchased at prices which will fairly remunerate the seller, and the second year the planter and farmer may bring under cultivation all the soil his whole disposable force can manage. It is therefore only the work of a few years, not of a life-time, to settle and subdue such a territory. The emigration from the southern States to the coast region, and far up the rivers, will be immediate and immense. The whole upper country in Western Texas will be settled and cultivated by free labor. By men of intelligence in Texas this is not doubted. No field like this has been opened to the sinewy arm of northern labor. Into this region too will over-populated, industrial Germany pour her uncounted thousands. It has already become, and will continue to be, the El Dorado of that quiet, indefatigable and thrifty people. In relation to this point, we have indications that cannot be mistaken. Bishop Odine, who returned from a visit to Europe, in 1845, states that there was a *furor* of enthusi-

asm in Belgium, caused by the accounts of Texas received there from German residents in that country, which those only can understand who have witnessed it. He says that had it not been for the agitation of the Oregon question, there would have been ten thousand emigrants from Antwerp alone, that season; that the ultimate extent of emigration could not with any certainty be estimated; one thing only being unquestionable, that it would be immense. From Mayence 1400 had embarked in a single day, and 20,000 would soon follow, if hostilities did not take place.

The war holds in check—it has not turned aside—this human flood. The German settlers in Texas are doing remarkably well, notwithstanding the want of protection on the frontier, and the many obstacles they have encountered, as strangers, in a new country. They have recently commenced a settlement on the Llano which is rapidly progressing. This is sixty miles from Fredericksburgh. The land in the valley of the Llano is very fertile and productive, and the climate even more healthy than the older settlement of *Braunfels* or Fredericksburgh. This region is elevated from 1000 to 1500 feet above the level of the Gulf. The air is sufficiently pure and invigorating for emigrants from the mountainous regions of Europe. The gardens and fields of the Germans, supplied them, even the first year, with more produce than they could consume.

There is also a settlement on the Pierdenales, and another is soon to be formed on the San Saba whose extensive and fertile valley is capable of sustaining half a million of souls. This is within the range of country we have described as equal to any on the globe for the production of wheat, barley, rye, oats and all the valuable cereals. The Germans can testify to the truth of this statement. They have already constructed flouring mills and saw mills, which are in full and profitable operation.

Encouraging as this sketch may seem, the valley of the upper Rio Grande possesses many advantages even over these settlements. Let two hundred pioneer families from the north once be located in this quarter, and more than half the work of peopling the whole country will be accomplished. No people can be compared to our own in the rapidity with which they fell the forest, erect habitations, and subdue the virgin soil in a new country. Around such a nucleus the European emigrants will cluster and flourish, as naturally and as certainly as the harvest follows seed time. This opinion will be verified as soon as the smoke of the cannon has cleared away. Here locations judiciously chosen will present the advantages of a healthy, easily cultivated, productive country on the one hand, and on the other, will command a trade equal if not superior to that of St. Louis, Missouri. This brings us to the only remaining point to be considered, which is—

THE COMMERCE OF THE RIO GRANDE.

THE time is at hand when the attention of business men and capitalists cannot fail to be drawn to channels of trade soon to be opened in this quarter. Water does not more naturally flow to the ocean than trade concentrates at points indicated by natural advantages, unless thrown into circuitous and artificial channels by conventional restrictions. Restraints heretofore existing in trade, on this new south-western boundary of our Republic, will be thrown off on the return of peace. The capacity of the Rio Grande for steamboat navigation, is no longer a matter of doubt. From Point Isabel to Camargo, a distance of 200 miles, and near 500 by the windings of the river, steamers pass daily at the lowest stages of the water. Lieut. Tilden, in the steamboat Major Brown, recently went up three hundred miles farther, to Loredo, near the point where General Wool crossed with his army. The steamboat met but a single obstacle, a sand bank, over which she forced her way without difficulty. The river was at the time unusually low. Here, on the left bank of the river, Cannel Coal was found in abundance and of an excellent quality. Six or eight tons were taken on board, and measures have since been adopted to supply from this source our steamers in the Gulf.

The writer is inclined to believe, from all he has been able to learn on the subject, that the junction of the Rio Grande with the Puerco will be the head of steamboat navigation on the former. The spot is 400 miles from Point Isabel in a direct line, and near 1000 by the course of the river. That this point will speedily become a place of commanding importance, may be briefly shown.

From the Gulf to the junction of the rivers is a region of varied soil and climate, suitable for the cultivation of sugar, cotton, wheat, corn, and fruits and vegetables of all descriptions; and embracing, still farther back along the Guadaloupe range, inexhaustible and perpetual pasture of the finest quality for the raising of sheep and other domestic animals. With all these desiderata it is, as has already been shown, peculiarly adapted to free labor. The advantages of steamboat navigation, as well as the natural features of the country, would seem to point out the confluence of the Puerco and Rio Grande as a convenient business place; and although not favorable to the building of towns merely on paper, the writer, for the sake of illustration, and of establishing a point from whence distances can be measured, will name the *embryo* town, or city, *Hermosa*, the Mexican or Spanish word for Beautiful.

On a line S.E. from the place above indicated, and about 150 miles

distant therefrom, lies San Antonio, Texas; and 40 miles nearer in the same direction is Castroville, a flourishing German and French settlement. Hermosa must command a large portion of the business of exchange and supply of the whole upper region of Western Texas, as well as of the fertile valleys of the Puerco and the Rio Grande (stretching far up beyond the junction of these streams, and including, on the latter river, the city of Santa Fe, New Mexico), and also a large share of the peltry trade of the Rocky Mountains. On the opposite side of the river lies the province of Coahuila, where, at convenient distances, supplies of horses, mules, cattle and sheep, may be obtained in abundance for the use of thefirst settlers. Hermosa would thus become a depot and market for a large, healthy, and highly productive portion of Western Texas, and must, from this circumstance alone, grow in a few years to be a place of no small importance.

But in a commercial point of view it has other and still greater advantages. That it must necessarily command a very extensive and profitable commerce with the Northern Provinces of Mexico, lying west of the Rio Grande, will, on an examination of its natural facilities, become apparent. The war, and the consequent lack of security on the frontier, have alone prevented the whole overland trade between the United States and Mexico from passing through the valley of the Rio Grande. But for these drawbacks it would long ago have taken that direction. That the Santa Fe route cannot compete with this new avenue of international commerce, may be easily shown.

In the first place, Santa Fe, although the capital of New Mexico, does not contain more than 3,500 inhabitants. For many years the mines, though rich, have been poorly worked, and the consumption of goods at that place has been comparatively small. Santa Fe is, in fact, a mere point, a *quasi* port of entry, where the traders from the United States and from the Northern Departments of Mexico meet for traffic. It is this traffic, this exchange of merchandise for the precious metals, which has given to Santa Fe its vast importance, and the commerce of the prairies centred there all the interest of distant ocean navigation.

The extent of this trade has never been accurately known—or, if known, it has never been published to the world. Those who knew most about it have been engaged in the trade, and had therefore, strong motives for keeping their information to themselves. Gen. Almonte, in his elaborate report to the Supreme Government in 1834, estimated the amount of bullion, annually passing to the United States through this channel, at two millions of dollars.

That the Santa Fe trade has contributed largely to build up, enrich

and give importance to St. Louis, is most certain; and that the flourishing town of Independence on the Missouri is indebted for its origin and subsequent prosperity to the same cause, is no less true. For more than twenty-five years this trade has been perseveringly carried on, often with immense and never without large returns. Narratives of the stirring border incidents of the present season (1846) have given a degree of publicity to the details of its importance and extent, which they had never before obtained.

It is now well ascertained that more than one million of dollars, in gold and silver, has been invested in merchandise for the "prairie voyages" during the past year. Philadelphia, and not New York, has for many years furnished the principal portions of the goods for the Santa Fe trade. These goods have been sent over the mountains, down the Ohio, and up the Mississippi to St. Louis. From that place to Santa Fe, the distance is 1200 miles, over bad roads and through predatory tribes of Indians. As a protection from the latter, squadrons of United States troops have, on several occasions, by order of the Government, accompanied the large caravans.

Independence has of late years become the point of departure for a majority of the Santa Fe traders. Some, however, have gone and continue to go by way of Van Buren, up the Arkansas river, and from thence eight hundred miles by land, over the prairies. A trade must be profitable that will justify, year after year, such distant and costly overland transportation, and any new line that will relieve it from the onerous transit charges referred to, must—other things being equal—command the business.

David Waldo, a highly intelligent and respectable merchant, for twenty years engaged in this overland trade, estimates its amount during the past season at nine hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred dollars worth of merchandise—as follows:

Value of goods, first cost, - - -	$937,500
400 large ox and mule wagons, - -	75,000
1750 mules, - - - - -	70,000
1000 yoke of oxen, - - - -	35,000
550 men for the trip, - - - -	75,000
Freight, insurance, &c. to St. Louis, - -	93,780
Provisions, and outfit of all kinds, - -	61,000
	$409,780

No better authority can be given than that from which the above estimate is derived. It shows the cost of transportation on less than one million dollars worth of goods to be nearly four hundred and ten thousand

dollars, to Santa Fe. Further shipments of goods were made after the date of Mr. Waldo's estimate, and with a fair allowance for the additional vehicles, &c., required to transport them, the aggregate for the past season may be fairly set down at five hundred wagons, besides pack mules, and nearly one thousand men. This would seem to indicate, what is no doubt the fact, that considerable more than one million of dollars has been invested in this bold traffic, during the past year, and that the expenses have been proportionably heavy. Indeed, such are the unavoidable expenses by this circuitous route, that merchants whose sales have averaged only one hundred per cent. on first cost, have deemed it a good year's business, when their net profits have reached forty per cent.

Now there is no doubt that the same amount of goods may be delivered at Hermosa, on the Rio Grande, for very little (if any) more than the cost of transportation between the city of New York and St. Louis, Missouri; to say nothing of the economy of time, an important element in commercial transactions. For example, but one trip a year can be made between this city and Santa Fe, *via* St. Louis, while *four* trips can be made within the same period, with great ease, to the mouth of the Puerco, on the Rio Grande.

But this saving of time is by no means the only consideration. A brief examination of the map will disclose other advantages. Let it be borne in mind that Santa Fe, as already stated, is not the portion of Mexico where any considerable amount of this merchandise is consumed; but a mere point *en route*, where the Mexican traders from the South meet those from the United States. There the merchandise is taken from the heavy wagons and placed upon pack mules, when the Mexican Jason, in his turn, commences a journey in search of the golden fleece.

Leaving Santa Fe, for 320 miles, the Mexican merchants continue down the East or Texas side of the Rio Grande to the Paso del Norte, where they cross the river and enter a small but thrifty settlement of near 8,000 inhabitants. From the Paso del Norte to Chihuahua, the capital of the province of the same name, is 230 miles farther, or 550 miles from Santa Fe, and 1750 from St. Louis—while from Hermosa to Chihuahua the distance is not more than 150 miles. The city of Chihuahua contains 30,000 inhabitants; the province is rich in valuable mines, and is one of the finest wool growing regions in America. Wool is, indeed, the staple of the State and its first outlet to a profitable market will be the Valley of the Rio Grande. The annual consumption of foreign goods in this provinee, is set down by intelligent Mexican merchants at from two millions to three millions of dollars.

Durango, with a larger population than Chihuahua, and deriving four

millions of dollars annually from the mines, of course consumes a still larger quantity. The capital contains 25,000 people, is 800 miles from Santa Fe, 2,000 from St. Louis, and only 360 from Hermosa; while the department of Coahuela stretches along the west side of the Rio Grande, and its capital, containing a population of 30,000, is within 150 miles of Hermosa.

The small and not wealthy province of New Leon is quite in the neighborhood.

In brief, the region of which Hermosa forms the most convenient depot and commercial emporium, comprehends the entire provinces of *New Mexico*, *Chihuahua*, portions of *Sinaloa* on the Gulf of California, *Durango*, *Zacatecas*, and the northern portions of *Xalisco*. The most remote of these is not more than 500 miles from Hermosa. Within this circle, too, are obtained two-thirds of all the gold and silver extracted annually from the mines of Mexico.

No practical man will aver that the profits on merchandise exported to this region will continue to be as large as they have been; but in lieu of this the consumption will be greatly increased and the returns quicker and more sure; while the navigation of the Rio Grande to such a distance in the interior, will create an active traffic in numerous articles of real value, which have hitherto lain dormant for want of the means of transportation to a suitable market.

Heretofore the ports of Vera Cruz, Matamoras and Tampico on the Gulf, and Mazatlan and Guaymas on the California side, have been the principal starting points for this portion of the interior; and the English and French merchants monopolized the lion's share, until the Santa Fe traders with bold and daring enterprise put in for a small portion of the profits.

In conclusion, if any thing further were wanting to show that the Santa Fe trade may be thrown into this new channel and its field enlarged many fold, it will be found in the fact that during the last six years of active or threatened war between Texas and Mexico, the traders from the Northern provinces of Mexico, without any safe passport, without any adequate protection against the Indians, have made their way to San Antonio and Corpus Christi, and brought with them on an average, $300,000 annually, in gold and silver, for the purchase of goods.

No wonder, then, that the French nation, with a far-reaching and clear-sighted sagacity made tempting overtures to the Texan Government, with a view of obtaining exclusive privileges in the trade of the Valley of the Rio Grande.

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